

# SCRÍOBH



DECEMBER 2021 | ISSUE NO. 11

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## Editorial: Jouissance, from sexual to supplementary – to impossible to negate.

Raphael Montague

In this Issue #11 of *Scríobh* – the *a*-periodic Newsletter of ICLO Society of the New Lacanian School – we present a series of texts by which we can weave several threads together: sexual difference, modes of jouissance, the symptom... in “the spirit of the knots<sup>1</sup>” – the *raison d’être* for *Scríobh* is to bring translations of key texts in the Lacanian Orientation into the English language and this Issue certainly achieves that.



First up, É. Laurent’s *Lacanian Unarism and the Multiplicity of Sexual Behaviours* – in three turns, from *Encore*, *Étourdit* and *L’insu que sait de l’Une-bévue s’aile à mourre*, É. Laurent guides the reader through the movement of Lacan last teaching with regard to a radical unarism – in respect to the status of the symptom and the jouissance of bodies: Lacan, one can say, extracts theoretical consequences from psychoanalytic practice: “[t]here is no sexual relation, but there is nevertheless a signifying relation at the sexual level, a signifying relation that is not a relation to the Other, but to the phallus,<sup>2</sup>” being the “classical” starting point in relation to identification with the symptom – over to RSI-composited-man, given substance by his *sinthome* – substantive jouissance beyond the imaginary partner of the fantasy, acceding to a jouissance impossible to negate,<sup>3</sup> as distinct from that derived in the phallic theatre of lack, “that surpasses the aporias of phallic Eros<sup>4</sup>” ... *pastoute sex as such*... and the resultant multiplicity of possibilities

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<sup>1</sup> Laurent, É., *This Issue*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, J.-A., *A New Alliance with Jouissance*, *The Lacanian Review*, Issue No. 2, Autumn, 2016, p. 116.

<sup>4</sup> Laurent, É., *This Issue*, p. 3.

M. Bassols, in *The Difference between the Sexes does not exist in the Unconscious*, takes up the challenge in the arena of the political: what are the consequences, with respect to theories that are critical of psychoanalysis as pro-hetero-patriarchal, of accepting that the Freudian field establishes, and holds that, there is no signifier for sexual difference at the level of the unconscious? “The unconscious behaves as if there were only sex” and, says Bassols, “the problem is to know which one.”<sup>5</sup> From the cultural constructions of gender to an assessment of so-called non-binarism, Bassols deftly argues that since we are governed by the “iron law of the signifier,”<sup>6</sup>  $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ , then it is not with the negation from *binary* to *non-binary* that we can get out of this system, by trying to write a new language with new grammar. One begins to see the importance of recognising what Lacan highlights by unarism in respect of knowing how to handle one’s symptom. From the “law of binarism of the One and the Other”<sup>7</sup> – we get to grasp something of the why of Lacan’s casting of jouissance from the field of logic to that of the substantive – that of the ontic – because when we enter the register of jouissance we “enter the field of the One without the Other,”<sup>8</sup> which, as Bassols draws, out has consequences for those who would attempt to falsely label psychoanalysis as *hetero-patriarchal*.

In *Politics of Language, Ethics of Jouissance*, Neus Carbonell shifts the emphasis to the movement in Lacan’s teaching from the subject of the unconscious structured as a language, divided by the signifier, to the jouissance “grounded in the cut”<sup>9</sup> of the mark of the signifier on the body of the parlêtre, where psychoanalysis of the Lacanian Orientation recognises *lalangue* – in one word, and offers an ethical response in terms of the treatment of this “supplementary jouissance.”<sup>10</sup> And this essay on *moterality* and the ethics of jouissance brings us nicely to our fourth and final text of this Issue #11 of *Scríobh*: Caroline Heanue’s fine report on “Joyce and the Feminine Principle”- ICLO-NLS 2021/2022 Opening Event a conversation about *feminine* jouissance, jouissance *as such* and Joyce’s *sinthome* centred on a reading of Thomas McNally’s 2018 Lilliput Press edition of “The Mookes and the Gripes”, extracted from *The Wake*. Caroline reminds us that in the case of the writing of James Joyce, his singular and ethical response to the vicissitudes of the three impossible *dit-mensions* where “such a precarious anchoring in language,”<sup>11</sup> for him, required the writing of a *sinthome*, “with the letter of writing acting as border on the real as limit.”<sup>12</sup> And thus, in an act of *saying*, let’s thank our contributors for their generosity and also our linguistic reviewers and translators... for their keen wit and hard graft. And with that dear reader, from all here on the *Scríobh* Editorial Team, we wish you a Happy New Year!

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<sup>5</sup> Bassols, M., Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.6.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Carbonell, N., Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Heanue, C., Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

# Lacanian Unarism and the Multiplicity of Sexual Behaviours<sup>1</sup>

Éric Laurent

This text follows on from *Remarks on Three Encounters between Feminism and the sexual non-relation*, which can be read in *Lacan Quotidien* No. 861, 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2019.

*Two ways of reading the "relation that does not exist"...*

Lacan begins his Seminar *Encore* by supposing his audience "in bed, a bed employed to its fullest, there being two [...] in it"<sup>2</sup> and he opposes the *One* of love and the signifier, and the *One* of jouissance. As Jacques-Alain Miller highlights: "the couple relationship at the sexual level supposes that the Other becomes the symptom of the *parlêtre*, that is to say, a means of its jouissance. [...] It is a means of jouissance [...] of my own body [...] it is a mode of enjoying [*de jouir*] the body of the Other, and by the *body of the Other*, we must understand at the same time one's *own body*, which always has a dimension of otherness, and also the *body of another* as a means of jouissance of one's own body [...]. This is what we have to manage with, to get by with. *Identification with the symptom* is therefore not quite the same as identification with a signifier. It is rather of the order of *I am as I enjoy* [*je jouis*]."<sup>3</sup>

This identification with the symptom defines a *know-how* or a *knowing how to do with* the sexual partner as a means of jouissance. "To know one's symptom would mean to know how to do with it, to know how to disentangle it [*le débrouiller*], to handle it."<sup>4</sup> This is what one does with the sexual partner: one more or less manages to deal with it in the encounter of bodies. This is how Lacan includes both the erotic practices of handling bodies, the way in which they are marked, and the *débrouille*, another name for [the] muddle [*embrouille*], by which one takes [the] objects *a* from the body of the other.

To *do with* this jouissance, which is a mixture of the real, the symbolic and the imaginary, it is no longer enough to rely on the resources of meaning, as the first reformulation of the Freudian unconscious invited us to do - inaugurating the so-called "classical" period of Lacan's teaching based on the approach to the unconscious structured as a language, that is to say, on the opposition between signifier and meaning, opening out onto the meaning of the symptom. In November

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<sup>1</sup> Text originally published in the French in *Lacan Quotidien* No. 865, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XX, Encore*, Transl. B. Fink, New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, J.-A., *L'orientation lacanienne: The partner-symptom* (1997-1998), Teaching delivered under the framework of the Department of Psychoanalysis University Paris VIII, Course of the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1998, Unpublished.

<sup>4</sup> Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XXIV, L'insu que sait de l'Une-bévue s'aile à mourre*, Lesson of the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1976, Established by J.-A. Miller, in *Ornicar ?* No. 12/13, 1977, p. 6. Unpublished in English.

1976, a new perspective took shape, based on a know-how concerning the treatment of the image: "What man knows how to do with his image [...] makes it possible to imagine the way in which one manages with the symptom."<sup>5</sup> One deals with the sexual partner as one does with one's image. There is always a degree of narcissism in the choice of partner. However, what is at issue is not of the order of enrapture by the image, but the handling that this permits: "It is a matter of secondary narcissism, which is radical narcissism, the narcissism that we call primary being excluded on this occasion."<sup>6</sup> This exclusion is a consequence of the otherness of the body marked by the "One has it."

The squabbling of the sexes at the level of the signifier is established by the relation to the phallic signifier, which Lacan calls the *point of myth* of the relation of the sexes, playing on the fact that if the Oedipus complex is a myth, the castration complex is not. [J.-A. Miller points out]: "Lacan first re-established the difference between the sexes through the phallic signifier, by positing that [...] the subject of each sex has a specific relation with the phallus [...] sexuated beings have a different relation to the phallus depending on whether they are male or female. This is a version of: *"there is no sexual relation."*<sup>7</sup> It is a way of saying - and it's this that Lacan elaborates in *Étourdit* - that there is no signifying relation but to the phallus. There is no sexual relation, but there is nevertheless a signifying relation at the sexual level, a signifying relation that is not a relation to the Other, but to the phallus.

For Freud, the phallus is a solution. There was the phallus to respond to the visible of sex, and the *penisneid* did the rest as for the copula. For Lacan, on the other hand, the phallus forms an obstacle. He concludes that "the dialogue from one sex to the other is interdicted by the fact that a discourse, whichever it may be, is based on the exclusion of what language brings to it of the impossible, namely the sexual relation, resultantly there is some inconvenience as regards the interior dialogue of each (sex)."<sup>8</sup> Yet the impasse, which has no solution at the level of the signifier, can be overcome. Lacan already had recourse to the logic of [the] "overlapping of two lacks." In *Étourdit* he proposes a "[knowing] how to shape one's behaviour" based on the "*dit-mensions* of the impossible": "From all this he [the subject of sex] will know how to shape its behaviour. There is more than one, tons of them even, to suit the three *dit-mensions* of the impossible: as they unfold in sex, in meaning, and in signification."<sup>9</sup>

This braiding of the three *dit-mensions* of the impossible, to be taken into account in order to "shape one's behaviour," leads Lacan to the solution of the writing of the knots by which the articulation of the three proper names R, S and I now supplements the phallus to name the effects of jouissance. The *spirit of the knots*, as J.-A. Miller says, is not the copula of the phallic doctrine:

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Miller, J.-A., op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Lacan J., *L'étourdit*, in *Autres écrits*, Paris: Seuil, Champ Freudien, 2001, p. 487.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

*it is essentially the reminder of the disjunction that founds the knot, that of the symbolic, the real and the imaginary, that is to say, the reminder that man is composite, that he is not a substance, a Being that pertains to the body/gives substance to the body, he is not an Aristotelian Being [:] it is the sinthome that gives him a substance.*<sup>10</sup>

This substance is jouissance, obtained by a means that surpasses the aporias of phallic Eros and of its universal.

Sex as such, can only be supported by a refusal of the logical of *all*. It is but an embrace of *not-all*. Let's reread in this perspective the declaration of *Étourdit*: "What we call sex [...] is properly, in being sustained by *notall* [*pastoute*], [*the Heteros*] that cannot be quenched by the universe. Let us call heterosexual by definition, the one that loves women, whatever its own sex. That will be clearer."<sup>11</sup> This formulation takes up Lacan's critique of Simone de Beauvoir's book, *Le deuxième sexe*, refusing the binarism it implied. Lacanian *Unarianism* is radical.

The experience of sex as such only occurs at the point where representation is lacking, at the point where the subject cannot say anything other than: *it is experienced* [*ça s'éprouve*]. From the central silence of women on their jouissance, Lacan has made clarity and positivity. It is the experience of sex as such. Otherwise, what is experienced is the jouissance of the organ, specifically phallic. The different jouissances that can be sought are experiences, experimentations, around the radical opposition between sexuated jouissance and jouissance of the organ. All sorts of sexual behaviours are indeed possible. They are as many testimonies of encounters with the impossible. Let's remain with this clarity.

Translation: *Raphael Montague*  
Revision: *Veronique Voruz*

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Miller, J.-A., *Spare Parts*, Transl. A. Price, in *Psychoanalytical Notebooks*, Issue 27, 2014, pp. 106-107.

<sup>11</sup> Lacan J., *L'étourdit*, op. cit., p. 467.

# The Difference between the Sexes does not exist in the Unconscious<sup>1</sup>

Miquel Bassols<sup>2</sup>

Concerning Paul B. Preciado's presentation: *Je suis un monstre qui vous parle. Rapport pour une académie de psychanalystes*.<sup>3</sup>

This may come as a surprise to those who are merely familiar with a caricatured version of psychoanalysis, and it will be especially surprising to those who have not read Lacan as he deserves. And yet, there it was, like the purloined letter in Edgar Allan Poe's short story - a specialist in monsters - in plain sight and hidden from everyone.<sup>4</sup> There is nothing in the Freudian unconscious - nothing in its formations - dreams, symptoms or delusions - that would assure us that the difference between a man-being and a woman-being is inscribed there. The unconscious behaves as if there were only one sex, and the problem is to know which one. Let's repeat this for the sake of clarity; having searched and researched it: there is no trace of this sexual difference in the Freudian unconscious, literally, nothing of it anywhere. Psychoanalysis could hardly build its architecture on a difference of which there is no trace in the unconscious! That Paul B. Preciado attributes the opposite to psychoanalysis may or may not be due to simple ignorance, it amounts to exactly the same thing for the purposes of the argument.

The question is not resolved by restating that gender, whether or not it is distinct from sex, is nothing more than a cultural construction.<sup>5</sup> There are many differences inscribed in the unconscious in terms that are each defined, precisely, by the binary difference with the other: active-passive, present-absent, see-be seen, swallow-be swallowed, expel-be expelled, phallus-castration, father-mother, son-daughter... - the list goes on, but not infinitely. However, it is impossible to differentiate and establish a relationship between things that have no representation in the unconscious. This is the case with being-man and being-woman.

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<sup>1</sup> Text published in the Spanish on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2020 on the Zadig Spain Blog.  
<https://zadigespana.com/category/miquelbassols/>

<sup>2</sup> Miquel Bassols psychoanalyst, member of the ECF, former President of the World Association of Psychoanalysis.

<sup>3</sup> Preciado P.B., *I am a Monster who Talks to You, Rapport pour une académie de psychanalystes*, Paris: Grasset, 2020. Text from a manifesto delivered at the invitation of the *École de la Cause freudienne* during its 49<sup>th</sup> Study Days, "Women in Psychoanalysis", November 2019. Cf. "Interview with Paul B. Preciado by François Ansermet and Omaïra Meseguer... *Lacan Quotidien*, N° 868, 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Lacan, J., *The Purloined Letter, Écrits*, Transl. B. Fink, New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006, p. 25-26.

<sup>5</sup> Here the debate continues to revolve around Robert Stoller's classical distinction between sex and gender. Cf. Stoller, R., *Sex and Gender, On the development of masculinity and femininity*, New York: Science House, 1968.

To formalise the binaries inscribed in the unconscious, Lacan sets out at the beginning of his teaching from his now famous axiom: *the unconscious is structured like a language*, that is to say, it is constructed with an architecture made from the differences between its elements, elements defined precisely by these differences. These binaries are differences between “signifiers,” according to the term picked up by Lacan from the linguistics of his time, which understood, and continues to understand, language as not defined by some *a priori* essence or meaning, but as a system of differences. Language and the discourses that are constructed by and from language are necessarily founded on this category of relative difference between its elements. And it does not seem so easy to get out of this iron law of language in which each of us is immersed, always without knowing it at all. It is on this solid difference between two elements that a whole system has been built, that every known civilisation has been built: mind/body, nature/culture, normal/pathological, man/woman, hetero/homo, yin/yang, etc. Difference is the principle of a machinery that goes as far as it can go, often along pathways of segregation, more or less hard, more or less subtle, but always towards places that are truly inhospitable, if we would like to preserve the singularity of the human beings that we are in claiming this singularity.

Lacan, beginning from this axiom and supported in terms of the binarism of the signifier, was to arrive at another axiom, more complicated in appearance, but ultimately more simple: *there is no sexual relation*. This means, in the first instance: there is nothing in the human being that assures the existence of a difference between the sexes that would then allow for a relationship, normative or otherwise, to be established between them. Also, there is nothing about this in the unconscious, and every attempt at such an arrangement - including the proliferation of genders - seems destined to fail, to err in this perpetual trans-space.

The fact is that the robustness of the iron law of “difference” goes so far as to construct a discourse that pretends to ensure an identity. And when it comes to sexuality, it must be said, that it doesn't go very far. When it comes to sexuality and modes of jouissance, when it comes to resolving the most intimate question of sexual identity for each human being, taken one by one beyond consideration of gender, there are not enough iron bars to assemble the cage. Any attempt to resolve the question of sexual identity fails inexorably if it only works with the category of “difference” as a compass for traversing that desert, the desert of jouissance, where, let us say here, there is no possible promised land. Put in a simpler and more direct way: in the desert of jouissance and sexual jouissance, there is no oasis, only mirage. Every human being is “trans” - whether transfugitive or transhuman - in transit or in transfer from one place to another: because there is always *one place* and *another place*, each of which can only be defined precisely by its difference, that of the one from the other.

This fact of structure is well stencilled throughout Freud's work. However, it is necessary to know how to read what is there, and not to read what is not there; with all the mirages and mirrors with which the masked ball of sexual life is



decorated. And, let's be clear, it was only Jacques Lacan who knew how to put these words in their proper place with this aphorism, always difficult to comment on without coming out: "there is no sexual relation."<sup>6</sup> In matters of sexuality, there is no way to establish identities based on the difference between signifiers, whatever they may be. This leaves the human being - every human being without exception - in a rather precarious position when it comes to establishing solid identifications. Everything that can be constructed in the discourse of gender necessarily moves in this generalised transit between signifiers and masquerades, which the discourse and experience of psychoanalysis can help to traverse, but without any prior norm as a compass.

It is true, as P. B. Preciado mentions in various points of his speech: being a man and being a woman can only be defined by their difference from each other, as two signifiers of language, and not by an essence defined of itself. This is the point of agreement; and it is precisely on this very point that P. B. Preciado builds his entire disagreement and his criticism of psychoanalysts as a whole. The misunderstanding is thus assured. But misunderstanding is also the rule of any possible conversation. When two strongly agree, there is no conversation, only a consensus sustained in tacit agreements. And conversation, when it is analytical, always calls tacit agreements into question.

Difference, then, how to get out of it without finding oneself re-entering its empire governed by the iron law of the signifier, either by identifying with one of the two terms or by rejecting them? Difference already has something monstrous about it because it escapes from itself and expands throughout the system. And it expands all the more the more one wants to make of the system a totality, a whole or a cage.

This is also the problem of the "binary" and the "non-binary", on which P. B. Preciado bases his other critique of the analytic discourse. Where does the one, "the binary" end, and the other, "the non-binary", begin? The binary is contagious for all the elements of the system, whether we consider one element in relation to another or each element as opposed to all the others. Lacan wrote the code of the language virus in a very simple way:  $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$  (Lacan, in fact, is much simpler than Freud, even if he seems more complicated). With this pair of letters, assigned an order and an arrow that connects them in their difference, we have already written this whole system of genders that could seem so monstrous in its differences and segregations.

But it has already been observed that the very definition of "non-binary" on which Preciado's argument rests, whichever way one looks at it, is itself binary, constructed only by its difference with "the binary"? It is not with negation that one can get out of a binary system. This sleight of hand is not a simple logical paradox. Or rather, it is because it appears to be a paradox that it can be used to muddle all the cards in the game. No, it is not so simple to get out of logic and

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XIX, ... or Worse*, Transl. A.R. Price, Cambridge: Polity, 2019, 2019, pp. 4, 96.

binarism, which is always implicit in every structure of language, in every discourse that emerges from it. The binarism or dualism that nestles modestly, always silently, in every discourse is reproduced in each of the differences that are established between one element and another in the system. The addition of a third or fourth element does not annul the fundamental binarism, it simply displaces it towards each of the relations between the elements of the series under consideration: LGBTQ+... The iron law of the signifier will have no problem adding the M for "monster" to the list. There is room in the alphabet, and if one day we get to the end, we can do as we do with car number plates and write new combinations, all of them binary. The signifier knows no other law than that of the power of the master-signifier to organise differences. This undoubtedly has its political dimension, including when it comes to encaging human beings.

This law - the only one, in fact, beyond all legal and social norms - insists in a particular way when it comes to defining what "trans" is. We talk about *trans-male* and *trans-female*, so the binarism inevitably remains where it was, without having moved a muscle. So we need to find a way of approaching the *-trans* that would find a way to escape this iron law. P. B. Preciado is honest on this point: "It is not easy to invent a new language, to coin all the terms of a new grammar."<sup>7</sup> Efforts to incorporate the non-binary gender ending "es" into the dictionary - which is undoubtedly very difficult in the Spanish - go as far as they can, which is to say, not very far if it is a question of breaking the barrier of the binary, that iron law [*hierro*] - and error [*yerro*] - of language. If anywhere we can feel at home with P. B. Preciado, it's this attempt to create a new language with the words of the tribe, aiming at a new link between human beings beyond any segregation. This is the thread that the analytic discourse promotes, not only in the intimacy of individual experience, but also in the collective. It's the difficulty of the segregation of the One and the Other. Let us therefore call this law "the law of the binarism of the One and the Other", because this is how it presents itself in the discourses to which the human being always proves bondservant.

In any case, the fundamental factor is that the binary logic of the signifier only explains a part of sexuality, of identifications and modes of jouissance, and it is not the most important part. Let's say that it only explains the representable part of sexuality, what nowadays is usually called "gender". It explains the masked ball, but it cannot say anything about the music and the score around which the dance evolves. What happens if we try to submit the field of jouissance, as Lacan opened it up in the 1960s, to this binary logic? Well, the little machine of relative and binary difference stops working. The machine gets stuck, seizes up, producing all sorts of signs that psychoanalysts - but not only psychoanalysts - call "symptom". When it comes to jouissance, and especially sexual jouissance, we enter the field of the One... without an Other. Each with his fantasies and symptoms, each without knowing the score that encodes them; and here, we have to move to another logic, which is not that of relative and binary difference, "a new logic" that Lacan announced and developed in the last part of his teaching.

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<sup>7</sup> Preciado P.B., *I am a Monster Talking to You*, op. cit. p. 60-61.

Even a cursory reading of Lacan's [later] Seminars, in particular the Seminar *Encore*<sup>8</sup>, is enough to gather that this change of register is fundamental, that we enter into another logic, which is no longer the difference of the One and the Other, whoever they may be: rather, we are entering into the field of the One... without the Other. The One always deceives us when it presents itself to us as Other; an Other that we reject, that we segregate, that we consider as subaltern, even underdeveloped. And this is how we can also come to believe that we are strangers to it, even monstrous. In fact, we create the monster with this logic.

That this radical otherness - an otherness without an Other from which to define it - is the feminine - not the cultural figures of femininity - and cannot be attributed to patriarchy and the segregative logic of difference. It is an alterity logically prior to patriarchy to the extent that we can ask ourselves if the Father himself is perhaps, but only perhaps, one of the names of this alterity without an Other in which reciprocity might be sustained. There are many places where Lacan throws down the gauntlet to whoever wants to pick it up. Let's look at one:

*How to know if, as Robert Graves puts it, the Father himself, the eternal father of us all, is not one Name among others of the White Goddess, the one that according to him gets lost in the night of time, because she is the Different one, the forever Other in her jouissance - like those forms of the infinite whose enumeration we only start when we know that she is the one who will suspend us.*<sup>9</sup>

Here is the famous patriarchalism turned upside-down, definitively dismantled. The Father: just one name among others of the White Goddess, a myth that predates all patriarchal culture. It is no longer a question here of the relative difference to which P. B. Preciado refers, the difference of the sexes. It is an absolute difference, with no opposing Other such as to define it. It is the jouissance of the body, sexuality itself. There are a profusion of possible developments along this path - "the Name of the father can just as well be bypassed [...] on the condition of making use of it,<sup>10</sup>" - which was the theme of a Congress of the World Association of Psychoanalysis.<sup>11</sup> - And all the more fruitful if we were to discontinue saddling Lacanian psychoanalysis with the false label of hetero-patriarchal.

Translation: *Raphael Montague*

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XX, Encore*, Transl. B. Fink, New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co. 1998, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> Lacan, J., *The Spring Awakening, Analysis*, No. 6, Transl. S. Rodriguez, Australia: Deakin University Printery, 1995, pp. 32-34.

<sup>10</sup> Lacan J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XXIII, The Sinthome*, Transl. A.R. Price, Cambridge: Polity, 2016, p. 116.

<sup>11</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of the WAP, on the theme "The Name of the Father", held in Rome on the 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> of July 2006. <http://www.amproma2006.it/>

# Politics of Language - Ethics of Jouissance<sup>1</sup>

Neus Carbonell<sup>2</sup>

*Lalangue serves purposes that are altogether different from that of communication. That is what the experience of the unconscious has shown us, insofar as it is made of lalangue, which, as you know, I write in a single word to designate what each of us deals with, our so-called mother tongue, which isn't called that by accident.*<sup>3</sup>

It is not possible to understand the notion of the unconscious, as Jacques Lacan dealt with it, without taking into account the complex relation between language and jouissance. Lacan made a fundamental distinction in his arguments, designated by two different words: language and *lalangue*. With the first, he referred to language as a structure and a place of the Other – and although it might appear redundant, I would emphasise that this is *not* a notion taken from the field of linguistics. We find the clearest and earliest formulation of this idea in the well-known aphorism: “the unconscious is structured like a language.” In the first part of his teaching, the notion of the subject is subsidiary to this idea of language. In this way, the subject is the effect of a primordial and inaugural alienation to language. On the other hand, the neologism *lalangue*, which we find in the later Lacan and which runs together with the development of the concept of jouissance, is grounded in the cut between signifier and signified in order to designate the effects of the signifier upon the body of the speaking being. We are no longer dealing, then, with the language that divides the subject and separates it from the object of jouissance – lost and only recoverable in the form of an inadequate substitute. *Lalangue* points to the materiality (*moteriàlité*, Lacan will say) of the signifier that strikes the body, inserting into it a jouissance that has nothing to do with the body as organism – he will also call this a supplementary jouissance.

*Lalangue* indicates that language itself introduces jouissance into the body: this is what the unconscious becomes in Lacan's last teaching. In fact, it suffices to have observed the responses that a few-months-old baby gives to the games and caresses of its mother (or whoever incarnates this function), caresses frequently accompanied by words that work more through what they transmit than through their meaning. Jouissance is heard in the sounds and

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<sup>1</sup> The text, *Política de la lengua, ética del goce*, was first published in the Spanish on the Zadig España website on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2020.

<https://zadigespana.com/2020/12/15/politica-de-la-lengua-etica-del-goce/>

<sup>2</sup> Neus Carbonell, Psychoanalyst, Member of the WAP (ELP).

<sup>3</sup> Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XX, Encore*, Transl. B. Fink, New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998, p. 138. [Modified Translation]

laughter with which the baby responds. Thus, in a very precocious way *lalangue* introduces jouissance into the speaking being. And it is thus not for nothing that the first language of a subject is given the name *mother tongue*, as we read in the quote that introduces this text. For this very reason, “*lalangue* serves purposes that are altogether different from that of communication.” In effect, it is worth focusing on this point. From the 60s onwards - when Lacan abandons the notion of intersubjectivity that he himself had linked to the transference - misunderstanding and equivocation become the effects of language and the substance of the unconscious.

If we approach the problem from another angle, we might ask: what jouissance is served by the affirmation that the most important purpose of a language consists in the communication between speaking beings? What is hidden behind the banner of a universal and fraternal understanding? In fact, expansive linguistic state policies have tended to segregate other languages in the name of fraternity, religion, power and knowledge. It is worth recalling - from the dedication that Antonio de Nebrija wrote for Queen Isabella in his 1492 book on Spanish grammar - the famous phrase: “language was always the companion of empire.” Nebrija was trying to defend his work in the face of the Crown of Castile, during a time of colonial expansion in which priorities were more military than cultural. This is why he reminds us how empires have served the expansion of languages, indicating in passing the intimate relation between language and power. In effect, the history of languages, their triumphs and defeats, are inseparable from the political and military destiny of their speakers.

We have, then, the *lalangue* of the unconscious and language as a master signifier; the latter tormenting the discipline of linguistics. The analyses of the relation between language and civilisation run into the dead end of the master signifier. Even those who set out from apparently opposing positions end up stumbling over the same stone. This can be seen in the well-known debate between relativists and determinists. The relativists, who follow the spirit of Benjamin Whorf, defend the idea that languages simply put a name to a reality that pre-exists them; in such a way that these languages do nothing more than adapt to the forms of life of the civilisations that speak them. By contrast, the determinists, followers of the hypothesis of Edward Sapir, maintain that each and every language determines a culture. In this case, the disappearance of a language supposes the destruction of the forms of life that it made exist. If civilisation precedes language, cultural diversity is not linked to linguistic diversity. But for the determinists, by contrast there is such a link. Defenders of linguistic diversity and so-called study groups of endangered languages tend to start from this hypothesis, which is not far removed from the Romantic thought that saw in language the spirit of a people. We find here, to paraphrase Lacan’s critique of Heidegger, the metaphysics that plugs the hole of politics; in this case, the hole that each

and every language opens up by the mere fact of its introduction of equivocalness and misunderstanding.

There is no politics of language(s), then, that is not the servant of master signifiers. For things to be otherwise, a metalanguage would have to exist. There is, however, an ethics. Every language makes us suppose a form of jouissance, and can thus generate responses of love, hate or indifference. The rejection of the language of others is one of the age-old faces of segregation; but the primordial segregation is always the rejection of the language of the Other, of the incomprehensible language of the unconscious that speaks in each and every one. A psychoanalysis makes it possible to come to decipher this language, so foreign and so intimate, that inhabits each and every *parlêtre* that speaks in it. The worth of each and every language is only the jouissance that it makes resonate. To respond to this is a question not only of politics, but also of ethics.

Translation: *Howard Rousse*

## ICLO-NLS Opening Event Report: “Joyce and the Feminine Principle”<sup>1</sup>

It was not without decided anticipation that this event was awaited. Each year, ICLO-NLS hosts a special event in September to launch our work programme for the academic year. The title *Joyce and the Feminine Principle* was chosen to speak to both the themes of the NLS Congress and the WAP Great International Online Conversation to be held in 2022. Further, this title was anchored in *The Mookse & the Gripes*, a fable which James Joyce made use of.

How to find a way into the literary oeuvre of James Joyce, one which is considered so challenging and notoriously difficult? How best to put ourselves to work in order to try to extract something of how to speak of the feminine principle, and also of what Joyce teaches us about the *sinthome*? Lacan tells us that Joyce had no knowledge that he was fashioning the *sinthome* with his writing; underlining that Joyce is the pure *sinthome* of what's involved in the relation to language. The work path chosen was of a live reading of *The Mookse & the Gripes* (to which we owe our appreciation to the organising committee for this event<sup>2</sup>), which was followed by a roundtable conversation.

*The Mookse and the Gripes* is Joyce's retelling of Aesop's ancient fable of *The Fox & the Grapes*. It can be found embedded in Joyce's final novel, *Finnegans Wake* wherein there exists a body of fables. However, it was published in the form of a book in 2018, which contains over one hundred beautifully presented illustrations by Thomas McNally,<sup>3</sup> our guest on the day. Each illustration accompanying the text, finds its roots in a signifier from the fable thereby allowing the reader to grasp signifier and image together. This alone acts as an aide to the work of reading, which in itself is not without challenge, especially if one embarks on reading it alone. But this event went one step further in its live reading of the text, which was superbly executed by Sam Forde.<sup>4</sup>

In opening the event and presenting ICLO-NLS' work programme for the year, Linda Clarke, Chair of ICLO-NLS, began by acknowledging the very special venue chosen. The Museum of Literature Ireland (MoLI) is a beautifully preserved building of Georgian architecture in Dublin's city centre. MoLI houses a permanent collection of Joycean works, including copy No. 1 of *Ulysses*. However, in its former life, the building was home to Joyce's alma mater, University College Dublin. Indeed, the wonderfully grand room for our

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<sup>1</sup> *Joyce and the Feminine Principle*, ICLO Society of the NLS, Opening Event held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2021 in the Museum of Literature Ireland (MoLI) on St. Stephen's Green.

<sup>2</sup> ICLO-NLS members Raphael Montague, Linda Clarke, Florencia F.C. Shanahan, Rik Loose.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas McNally, Irish writer, artist, philosopher living in Dublin. As well as the *The Mookse & the Gripes*, (2018) The Lilliput Press Ltd, Dublin, Thomas has compiled and illustrated *The Ondt and the Gracehoper* - as a standalone book - also extracted from *Finnegans Wake*.

<sup>4</sup> Sam Forde is an Irish actor, writer, Bloomsday Events Coordinator, who lives and works in Dublin.

event overlooked the landscaped gardens - in fact, it was situated just above the sightline of the ash tree under which James Joyce had his graduation photograph taken in 1902.

With these immersive ties to Joyce, Linda regaled those present with perhaps little-known details of Joyce, especially in relation to his fledgling interest in music as a tenor singer. Two years after graduating, Joyce met John McCormack, who is recognised as one of Ireland's great tenors. It was said that Joyce's voice was indeed comparable to McCormack's, but it was a path he declined to follow. And so, the scene was set for ICLO-NLS' first in-body event since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020. The event was also the first to be live-steamed by ICLO-NLS.

Raphael Montague, who was instrumental in bringing the event to fruition, gave a brief introduction to the book and to the event. From Lacan's solitary use of the phrase "occultation of the feminine principle under the masculine ideal" in 1938,<sup>5</sup> he will return many years later, most notably in Seminar XXIII, to craft Joyce's relation to language and to his body and in so doing, demonstrate the effect of the signifier's *motérialité* on the body. The characters in *The Mookse & the Gripes* represent a microcosm of *Finnegans Wake*, exploring the persistent themes that preoccupied Joyce of religion, family, nationality, oppression. As the fable progresses, the two main characters embark to embattle each other, carried out on the imaginary axis, opposing and invariably cancelling each other out. It is towards the end, that the feminine character of Nuvoletta - the new letter - makes her entrance and tries to gain their attention, in vain. Something of this feminine principle, (sublimely illustrated by Thomas McNally in the book), escapes in a single tear which she sheds and cannot be recaptured. There is something of which escapes feminine jouissance. It is of this that Joyce captures in his retelling of the fable, vividly contrasting the function of the letter in relation to creativity versus the strictures of phallic signification.

Sam Forde then took to the podium to perform a live reading of the text. It was powerful: a performance, an interpretation, a reading, an embodiment of the characters, undulating in tone and volume, resounding throughout the room.

The resonance of Sam's reading was experienced in the body of those present in the form of a plus, and it was with these effects, not possible to consider in advance, that the conversation commenced.

Rik Loose offered a punctuation; focussing on the sonorous effect of language on the body. He spoke of Joyce's writing as an "art saying," existing for him outside any truth or meaning effects. In referencing the character of Stephen Dedalus<sup>6</sup> and how he pacified his body after a moment of de-realisation, the hole in language emerges as Stephen grasps hold of a rhythmic repetition of

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual," 1938

<sup>6</sup> The character of Stephen Dedalus appears both in *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist*.



letters and names in the attempt to cover it, to not loose himself completely. With such a precarious anchoring in language, the letter not fixated to the body, in its place the body requiring a regulation *via* the act of writing. It is this “art saying” that was Joyce’s *sinthome*, with the letter of writing acting as border on the real as limit.

Florencia Shanahan introduced Thomas McNally and opened the roundtable conversation by situating this punctuation as support.

Thomas spoke of his desire to bring *The Mookse & the Gripes* to a wider audience. His aim was to first decipher and then extract a coherent narrative, based on the way that the fables are told, outside any intention of meaning. In referring to the anarchy of the grammatical rules of language, his questioning of what Joyce does with language was both an interpretation and a treatment. Drawing upon, not only different languages, but also playing with the subverted use of fairy tales, prayers, current discourse, nothing is excluded nor forbidden for Joyce to make use of. An all-inclusive linguistic medium is opened up to incorporate any other European language. In this sense, Joyce passes beyond the limits of meaning of what can be said in any language. The question of what Joyce does with language can then be subverted to what language does with Joyce. It seems that language provides Joyce with the neological conditions necessary for that which is impossible for him to express in language, to find its place; albeit a place that will not remain secured forever, but only for a time. It is said, that when Joyce was working with the Italian translator on a chapter of *Finnegans Wake*, he said: “*we must begin work before it's too late. For the moment, there is still one person in the world, myself, who can understand what I have written. I can't guarantee that in two or three years I will still be able to.*”<sup>7</sup>

Thomas spoke of his interest of wanting to illustrate the text by tapping into Joyce’s humour in the retelling of the fable. He conceived the illustrations in no way as mimetic representation, insisting that they are but a gesture. What informed this task of illustration was a movement of abstraction, with the idea of his art mirroring what happens in *Finnegans Wake*: a text which ends with the last words “away, alone, at last, along, the” – leaving in suspense, or not saying anything at all, a complete abstraction, an emptying.

Upon which note the event, replete with effects, closed.

Caroline Heanue

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<sup>7</sup> McNally, T., “Introduction: A Portrait of Joyce as a Mature Artist,” in *The Mookse & the Gripes*, Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2018, p. 10.

# EVENTS

*December 2021 - April 2022*



## Members' Seminar

January  
closed group



## Child & Adolescent Seminar

conducted by  
*Joanne Conway*

December, February, May



## NLS Knottings Seminar

with  
*Bruno de Halleux*  
and  
*Roger Litten*

22 January 2022



## Theoretical & Clinical Seminar

*Laurent Dupont*  
*Alan Rowan*  
*Anne Lysy*

February, March, April



## Clinical Case Discussion

*co-ordinated by*  
*L. Clarke, C. Heanue,*  
*L. Klint,*  
*F.F.C. Shanahan*

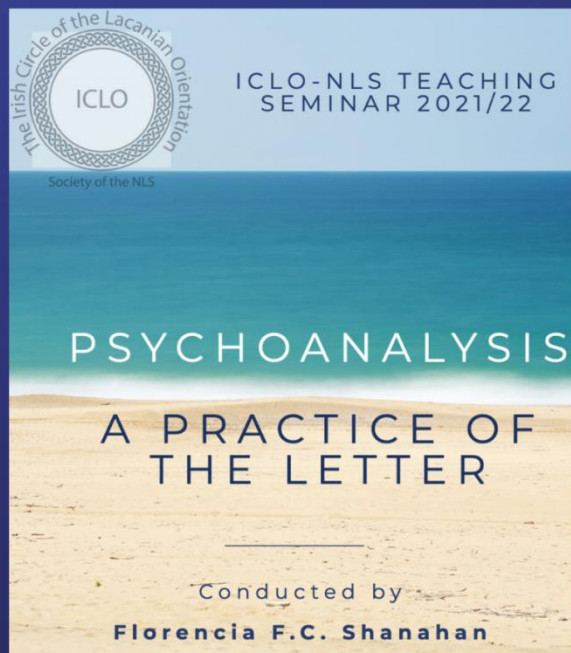
(2nd Wednesday each month)



## A Practice of the Letter Teaching Seminar

*conducted by*  
*Florencia F.C. Shanahan*

(4th Wednesday each month)



## Special Interest Group Child & Adolescent Lacanian Psychoanalysis

*co-ordinated by*  
*Denise Waters*

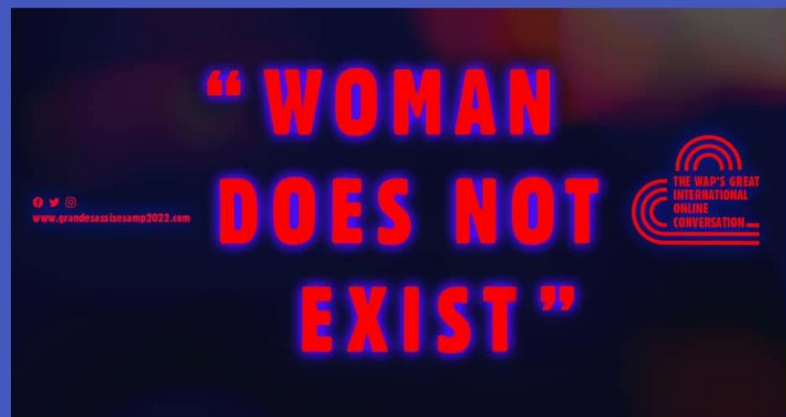
January, March  
closed group



World  
Association  
of  
Psychoanalysis

Great  
Online  
Conversation

31 March - 3 April 2022



The World Association of Psychoanalysis  
will open its doors wide  
*from 31 March to 3 April 2022*

with its  
Great International Online Conversation on the theme:  
**WOMAN DOES NOT EXIST**

*Member or not,  
register now [here](#),  
you will be welcome.*

*The objet.* Female sexuation in the century.  
*The spirit.* Eros and Politics.

*The format.* Virtual (videoconference) and real (a design outside of our usual routine)  
will be the condition for a new experience  
where time and space are essential..

*Unity of place.* From Paris, from north to south and from east to west,  
the Great Conversation will be present for each and every one.

*Unity of place.* 5 hours of videoconference per day.

*Each day will alternate between plenary sessions and simultaneous clinical sessions.*  
Short sequences, a lively rhythm conducive to interpretation.  
Plenary sessions in party dress.  
As many simultaneous sessions as possible,  
to gather the salt of what can be learned from today's analytical cures.  
Breaks.

Last, but not least, a *surprise* to close the event.

More, coming soon...

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**NLS Congress 2022**  
**"Fixation & Repetition"**

2nd & 3rd July 2022

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New Lacanian School  
Nouvelle École Lacanienne

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### **Bureau (2021-2022)**

**Chair:** Linda Clarke  
**Vice-Chair:** Caroline Heanue  
**Secretary:** Sheila Power  
**Treasurer:** Lilli Klint

### **NLS New Lacanian School**

### **Executive Committee (2020-2022)**

**President:** Alexandre Stevens  
**Vice-President:** Daniel Roy  
**Secretary:** Els Van Compernelle - Maria Cristina Aguirre – Ruzanna Hakobyan  
**Treasurer:** Bruno de Halleux

### **SCRÍOBH: the *a*-periodic newsletter of ICLO-NLS**

#### **Editorial Board**

**Sheila Power – Lorna Kernan – Caroline Heanue – Tom Ryan - Raphael Montague (Editor)**

#### **Scríobh Issue 11, December 2021**

**Linguistic Review:** Caroline Heanue, Raphael Montague, Véronique Voruz  
**Copy Editing:** Sheila Power, Caroline Heanue, Raphael Montague, Lorna Kernan, Tom Ryan  
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